

**TITLE: UNDERSTANDING TIBET**

**SUBJECT AREA / GRADE LEVEL:** Civics and Government, 7-12

**OVERVIEW:** Students work in cooperative groups to investigate recent and current situations found in Tibet and contribute to a classroom newspaper.

**STATE CONTENT STANDARDS / BENCHMARKS:**

- Explain how nations interact with each other...
- Recognize and interpret continuity and/or change with respect to particular historical developments in the 20th century.

**OBJECTIVES:** The student demonstrates the ability to...

- Work in cooperative groups to read one current situation of Tibet.
- Respond to a set of discussion questions.
- Write a newspaper article expressing the current information learned.

**MATERIALS:**

- Copies of Tibetan current situation summaries.
- Access to word processors / computers for printing of a class newspaper.

**PRESENTATION STEPS:**

- 1) Introduce the lesson by explaining that we will work in groups to investigate and report recent and current situations found in Tibet.
- 2) Move the class into cooperative groups. Provide each group a summary of one of the current situations of Tibet.
- 3) Instruct each group to read the summary, respond to a set of discussion questions, and prepare to write a newspaper article announcing the news of the read situation. More than one article may result from a single group. Encourage groups to include a message for readers of the article interested in helping Tibet. What can people do to help?
- 4) Correct the written articles from each group. Assemble an editorial team to layout and print a classroom newspaper featuring the news of Tibet.
- 5) As the editorial team produces the class newspaper, conduct a class discussion with the remaining students reviewing each summary and discussion questions.

**ASSESSMENT:** Each student should be asked to write an editorial or letter to the editor expressing views of Tibet's current situation. Develop a scoring guide to be used for the written piece.

**ADAPTATIONS:** Participate and contribute to the cooperative group efforts.

EXTENSIONS: Publish and distribute your classroom newspaper for the rest of the school to read. Raise your school awareness of Tibet and the Tibetan people. Submit your editorial or letter to the editor to your local newspaper for printing.

## TIBET CURRENT SITUATION SUMMARIES

### Group 1: Tibet Today-An Overview

In 1949 the People's Republic of China invaded and occupied Tibet, in violation of international law. His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Tibet's head of state and spiritual leader, a firm believer in nonviolence, tried for eight years to reach a peaceful solution to the problem of China's occupation of Tibet.

The cycle of resistance and brutal repression culminated in a national uprising against the Chinese on March 10, 1959. Chinese troops brutally crushed the revolt, killing over 87,000 Tibetans in Central Tibet alone, according to Chinese sources. His Holiness the Dalai Lama, his government and some 100,000 Tibetans were forced into exile.

In Dharamsala, India, where the Dalai Lama now resides, the Tibetan Government-in-exile has been reorganized along modern democratic lines. The 100,000 Tibetans are scattered across the globe.

- Over 1.2 million Tibetans - 1 out of 6 - have died as a direct result of the Chinese occupation.
- Over 6,000 monasteries have been destroyed and irreplaceable works of art and literature have been stolen, sold or taken out of Tibet.
- Well over half of Tibet's original territory has been appended to the contiguous Chinese provinces with only Central Tibet (U-Tsang) and parts of Eastern Tibet (Kham) remaining as the so-called "Tibet Autonomous Region."
- Since 1967 Tibet has been used for nuclear testing, including tests to determine the radiation tolerance of the local population.
- A massive influx of Chinese colonists into Tibet is overwhelming the indigenous population. Our best estimates indicate that there are 7.5 million Chinese to 6 million Tibetans in Tibet.
- Before the occupation, Chinese was considered a foreign language in Tibet. After the occupation, the People's Republic of China made Chinese the official language of Tibet.

### Discussion Questions

1. What did you learn having read an overview of Tibet?
2. How do you feel now that you have read this overview?
3. Do you think a solution is possible? What do you recommend?

## Group 2: Population Transfer

The transfer of Chinese into Tibet is reaching alarming proportions. If the present Chinese policy is successful, Tibetans will be reduced to an insignificant minority in their country as are the Manchus (35 Chinese to 1 Manchu), the Turkic peoples (3 to 1) and the Mongolians (5 to 1). The object of this policy is to forcibly "resolve" China's territorial claims over Tibet by means of a massive and irreversible population shift.

- In all major cities in Tibet, Chinese outnumber Tibetans. In Lhasa, estimates indicate there are 100,000 Chinese as compared to 50,000 Tibetans.
- This policy violates Article 49 of the 4<sup>th</sup> Geneva Convention (1949) which prohibits the transfer of parts of the occupying power's population into the territory it occupies.

### Discussion Questions

1. What are your thoughts concerning China's strategy of transferring its people into Tibet?
2. What do you think will happen to the Tibetan culture if this population transfer continues?
3. Do you think a solution is possible? What do you recommend?

## Group 3: Militarization of Tibet

Once a peaceful buffer state between India and China, Tibet has been militarized including holding at least 300,000 troops and 1/4 of China's 350-strong nuclear missile force.

The militarization of the Tibetan plateau profoundly affects the geopolitical balance of the region and causes serious international tensions. The Chinese military presence in Tibet includes:

- An estimated 300,000 to 500,000 troops of which 200,000 (15 divisions) are permanently stationed in the Tibet Autonomous Region (approximately 1 soldier for every 10 Tibetans)
- 17 secret radar stations and 14 military airfields
- 5 missile bases (Kongpo Nyitri, Powo Tamo, Rudok, Golmu and Nagchuka)
- At least 8 ICBMs, 70 medium-range missiles and 20 intermediate range missiles

(Source: Der Spiegel, 13 July, Nr. 29/1987; The Economist, May 23; Times of India, April 28, 1987)

### Discussion Questions

1. What impact does this information have on your thoughts concerning Tibet's situation?
2. What do you think the future of Tibet will be if this militarization of Tibet remains?

3. What impact might this militarization have on the social climate of Tibet?
4. Do you think this militarization of Tibet will have any impact on its environment?
5. Do you think a solution is possible? What do you recommend?

#### Group 4: Human Rights in Tibet

- In 1960 the International Commission of Jurists determined that China had committed genocide in Tibet and that 16 Articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights were being violated.
- In 1959, 1960 and 1965 the U.N. General Assembly passed resolutions 1353, 1723 and 2079 condemning Chinese human rights abuses in Tibet and calling on China to respect the Tibetan people's rights, including the right of self-determination.
- In 1991 the U.N. Human Rights Sub-commission passed a resolution expressing concern at the threat to "the distinct cultural, religious and national identity of the Tibetan people."
- Freedom House, a New York-based human rights group, declared that among all the occupied territories in the world, Tibet ranks as the worst case of human rights violations.
- An Australian human rights delegation in 1991 determined that Tibet is still effectively under martial law, despite its lifting in May 1990.
- Tibetan women are subjected to mandatory sterilization and forced abortions as a means of reducing the Tibetan population.
- Electric cattle prods are routinely used to sexually violate Tibetan women, including nuns who are arrested for their religious or political beliefs.
- 1 in 10 Tibetans has been held in prisons or forced labor camps for periods of 10 to 20 years. Today, about 10,000 religious and political prisoners face torture, forced labor and execution.
- Discrimination and segregation are openly practiced in areas such as medical care, education, housing, jobs, pay, etc.
- (Sources: John Avedon, *In Exile from the Land of Snows* [New York, 1984]; *Tibet: The Facts*, a report prepared by the Scientific Buddhist Assoc. for the U.N. Commission on Human Rights, 1986; New York Times, June 1987)

#### Discussion Questions

1. What impact does this information have on your thoughts concerning Tibet's situation?
2. What do you think the future of Tibet will be if these violations of human rights continue?
3. Do you think a solution is possible? What do you recommend?

## Group 5: The Dalai Lama's Five-Point Peace Plan

Read the following synopsis of the Dalai Lama's Five-Point Peace Plan. Keep in mind that this proposed solution was rejected by the Chinese government.

### FIVE-POINT PEACE PLAN FOR TIBET

In September 1987, the Dalai Lama proposed the following solution. It was rejected by the Chinese government.

1. Abandonment of China's population transfer policy which threatens the very existence of the Tibetans as a people.
2. Respect for the Tibetan people's fundamental rights and democratic freedoms.
3. Restoration and protection of Tibet's natural environment and the abandonment of China's use of Tibet for the production of nuclear weapons and the dumping of nuclear waste.
4. Transformation of the whole of Tibet into a zone of peace.
5. Commencement of earnest negotiations on the future status of Tibet and of relations between the Tibetan and Chinese people.

"The very nature of our struggle is different in the sense that there is no ideology involved in it. Tibetans are not anti-revolution, anti-Communist, anti-reform nor even anti-Chinese. What we are against is the forcible and illegal occupation of our country by a foreign power. We are fighting for our own rights - the right to govern ourselves and determine our own future." -His Holiness, the Dalai Lama

### Discussion Questions

1. Do you agree or disagree with the Dalai Lama's Five-Point Peace Plan?
2. Do you think The Dalai Lama's Five-Point Peace Plan can work?
3. Why do you think the Chinese rejected this plan?
4. Can you think of another solution to the problems in Tibet?

## Group 6: Environmental Devastation In Tibet

Tibet was ecologically stable before the Chinese invasion. The land supported a wealth of wildlife and famine was unknown. The fragile ecology of Tibet's high plateau is being irreversibly destroyed as a result of the Chinese incursion. Many species of wildlife have been virtually exterminated, forests clear cut and the soil depleted and eroded.

- There is evidence that China is using Tibet as a dumping ground for toxic and radioactive wastes.

- Endangered species such as snow leopards have been hunted to the verge of extinction.
- Deforestation of large areas of Eastern Tibet is being conducted by a lumber industry employing 65,000 people, entirely for export to China. Up to 80% of Tibet's forests have been destroyed - by their own estimates the Chinese have removed over \$54 billion worth of timber since 1959.
- In May 1991 the Chinese began construction of a power plant that will drain Yamdrok Tso, a pristine and sacred lake which is the third largest in Tibet.

### Discussion Questions

1. What will the future of Tibet be if this environmental devastation continues?
2. What solutions can you recommend?
3. What affect does the environmental devastation of Tibet have on peace in Tibet?
4. What affect does the environmental devastation of Tibet have on our planet as a whole?
5. Can the environmental devastation of Tibet have any impact on your neighborhood?

### Group 7: The Statement of His Holiness the Dalai Lama on the Thirty-Seventh Anniversary of Tibetan National Uprising Day

Embargoed until March 10, 1996

The Statement of His Holiness the Dalai Lama on the Thirty-Seventh Anniversary  
of Tibetan National Uprising Day  
March 10, 1996

As we commemorate today the thirty-seventh anniversary of the Tibetan people's uprising, we are witnessing a general hardening of Chinese government policy. This is reflected in an increasingly aggressive posture toward the peoples of Taiwan and Hong Kong and in intensified repression in Tibet. We are witnessing fear and suspicion throughout the Asian-Pacific region, and a worsening of relations between China and much of the rest of the world.

Within the context of this tense political atmosphere, Beijing has once again sought to impose its will on the Tibetan people by appointing a rival Panchen Lama. In doing so, it has chosen a course of total disregard both for the sentiments of the Tibetan people in general and for Tibetan spiritual tradition in particular, despite my every effort to reach for some form of understanding and cooperation with the Chinese government. Significantly, the official Chinese media compares the present political climate in Tibet with that in Poland during the Solidarity years of the 1980s. This demonstrates a growing sense of insecurity on the part of the Chinese leadership as a result of which, through a continuing campaign of coercion and intimidation, Beijing has greatly reinforced its repression throughout Tibet. I am therefore saddened to have to report that the situation of our people in Tibet continues to deteriorate.

Nevertheless, it remains my strong conviction that change for the better is coming. China is at a critical junction: its society is undergoing profound changes and the country's leadership is facing the transition to a new generation. It is obvious too that the Tiananmen massacre has failed to silence the call for freedom, democracy and human rights in China.

Moreover, the impressive democratization in process across the Taiwan Strait must further invigorate the democratic aspirations of the Chinese people. Indeed, Taiwan's historic first direct presidential elections later this month are certain to have an immense political and psychological impact on their minds. A transformation from the current totalitarian regime in Beijing into one which is more open, free and democratic is thus inevitable. The only outstanding question is how, when and whether the transition will be a smooth one.

As a human being, it is my sincere desire that our Chinese brothers and sisters enjoy freedom, democracy, prosperity and stability. As a Buddhist monk, I am of course concerned that a country which is home to almost a quarter of the world's entire population and which is on the brink of an epic change, should undergo that change peacefully. In view of China's huge population, chaos and instability could lead to large-scale bloodshed and tremendous suffering for millions of people. Such a situation would also have serious ramifications for peace and stability throughout the world. As Tibetan, I recognize that the future of our country and our people depends to a great extent on what happens in China during the years ahead.

Whether the coming change in China brings new life and new hope for Tibet and whether China herself emerges as a reliable, peaceful and constructive member of the international community depends to a large degree on the extent to which the international community itself adopts responsible policies toward China. I have always drawn attention to the need to bring Beijing into the mainstream of world democracy and have spoken against any idea of isolating and containing China. To attempt to do so would be morally incorrect and politically impractical. Instead, I have always counseled a policy of responsible and principled engagement with the Chinese leadership.

It became obvious during the Tiananmen movement that the Chinese people yearn for freedom, democracy, equality and human rights no less than any other people. Moreover, I was personally very moved to see that those young people, despite being taught that "political power comes out of the barrel of a gun" pursued their aims without resorting to violence. I, too, am convinced that nonviolence is the appropriate way to bring about constructive political change.

Based on my belief in nonviolence and dialogue, I have consistently tried to engage the Chinese government in serious negotiations concerning the future of the Tibetan people. In order to find a mutually acceptable solution, I have adopted a "middle-way" approach. This is also in response to, and within the framework of, Mr. Deng Xiaoping's stated assurance that "anything except independence can be discussed and resolved." Unfortunately, the Chinese government's response to my many overtures has been consistently negative. But, I remain confident that his successors will realize the wisdom of resolving the problem of Tibet through dialogue.



The Tibet issue will neither go away of its own accord, nor can it be wished away. As the past has clearly shown, neither intimidation nor coercion of the Tibetan people can force a solution. Sooner or later, the leadership in Beijing will have to face this fact. Actually, the Tibet problem represents an opportunity for China. If it were solved properly through negotiation, not only would it be helpful in creating a political atmosphere conducive to the smooth transition of China's into a new era, but also China's image throughout the world would be greatly enhanced. A properly negotiated settlement would furthermore have a strong, positive impact on the people of both Hong Kong and Taiwan and will do much to improve Sino-Indian relations by inspiring genuine trust and confidence.

For our part, we seek to resolve the issue of Tibet in a spirit of reconciliation, compromise and understanding. I am fully committed to the spirit of the "middle-way" approach. We wish to establish a sustainable relationship with China based on mutual respect, mutual benefit and friendship. In doing so, we will think not only about the fundamental interests of the Tibetan people, but also take seriously the consideration of China's security concerns and her economic interests. Moreover, if our Buddhist culture can flourish once again in Tibet, we are confident of being able to make a significant contribution to millions of our Chinese brothers and sisters by sharing with them those spiritual and moral values which are so clearly lacking in China today.

Despite the absence of positive and conciliatory gestures from the Chinese government to my initiatives, I have always encouraged Tibetans to develop personal relationships with Chinese. I make it a point to ask the Tibetans to distinguish between the Chinese people and the policies of the totalitarian government in Beijing. I am thus happy to observe that there has been significant progress in our efforts to foster closer interaction amongst the people of our two communities, mainly between exiled Tibetans and Chinese living abroad. Moreover human rights activists and democrats within China, people like the brave Wei Jingsheng, are urging their leaders to respect the basic human rights of the Tibetan people and pledging their support of our right to self-rule. Chinese scholars outside China are discussing a constitution for a federated China which envisages a confederal status for Tibet. These are most encouraging and inspiring developments. I am, therefore, very pleased that the people-to-people dialogue between Tibetans and Chinese is fostering a better understanding of our mutual concerns and interests.

In recent years we have also witnessed the growth of a worldwide grassroots movement in support of our nonviolent struggle for freedom. Reflecting this, many governments and parliaments have come forward with strong expressions of concern and support for our efforts. Notwithstanding the immediate negative reactions of the Chinese regime, I strongly believe that such expressions of international support are essential. They are vital in communicating a sense of urgency to the minds of leadership in Beijing and in helping persuade them to negotiate.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the numerous individuals, the members of governments, of parliaments, of non-governmental organizations and of religious orders who have supported my appeal for the safety and freedom of the young Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima. I am grateful for their continued intervention and efforts on behalf of this child who must be the world's youngest political prisoner. I also wish to thank our supporters all over the world who are commemorating today's anniversary of the Tibetan people's uprising with peaceful activities in every part of the globe. I urge the Chinese government not to construe such

support for Tibet as anti-Chinese. The purpose and aim of these activities is to appeal to the Chinese leadership and people to recognize the legitimate rights of the Tibetan people.

In conclusion, I am happy to state today that our exile community's experiment in democracy is progressing well without any major setbacks or difficulties. Last autumn, the Tibetans in exile participated in preliminary polls to nominate candidates for the Twelfth Assembly of the Tibetan People's Deputies, the parliament in exile. Next month, they return to the polls to elect the members themselves. This accords with my conviction that democracy is the best guarantee for the survival and future of the Tibetan people. Democracy entails responsibilities as well as rights. The success of our struggle for freedom will therefore depend directly on our ability to shoulder these collectively. It is thus my hope that the Twelfth Assembly will emerge as a united, mature and dedicated representative of our people. This ultimately depends on every franchised member of our community. Each one is called upon to cast his or her vote with an informed and unbiased mind, with a clear awareness of the need of the hour and with a strong sense of individual responsibility.

With my homage to the brave men and women of Tibet, who have died for the cause of our freedom, I pray for an early end to the suffering of our people. -The Dalai Lama

#### Discussion Questions

1. What message is the Dalai Lama trying to convey in this statement?
2. How do you feel after reading the Dalai Lama's statement?
3. Do you believe there is hope for Tibet's liberation? Why? Why not?
4. What can you do about the suffering of the Tibetan people?

#### Group 8: China set to build railway to Tibet

##### TIN News Update

London, 22 Dec - The construction of a railway to Tibet's capital, Lhasa, which has been a Chinese ambition since the 1950s, now looks set become a reality. Recent statements from Beijing indicate that China is planning to go ahead with the railway despite the unique difficulties presented by the altitude and terrain. The linking of central Tibet to China's railway network will have a dramatic impact on the region - it will create possibilities for the exploitation of mineral and natural resources that did not exist before and is likely to lead to increased migration into Tibetan areas. The Chinese authorities have made it clear that a key political aim in building the railway is to accelerate the assimilation of Tibet into "the motherland".

A meeting was held in Beijing in September to explore the feasibility of four different routes for the proposed railway. The Railway Ministry has since commented that it recommends the Qinghai route as the "best choice", rather than routes through Yunnan, Sichuan or Gansu provinces. The favored route would extend the line from Xining, which currently terminates at Golmud in central Qinghai. The construction of a railway to Lhasa now looks set to be on the agenda for China's Tenth Five Year Plan

period (2001-2005); one of the main tasks of the Ninth Five Year Plan had been to "complete the preparations for the building of a railway into Tibet". The final decision on the route is expected to be made by the Central Chinese Communist Party Committee and the State Council in spring 2001.

A Tibet specialist who has carried out extensive field research in Tibetan areas in the areas of all the proposed routes believes that the construction of the railway would have a profound and irreversible impact on the future of Tibet. Steven Marshall, co-author with Dr Susette Cooke of the CD-ROM "Tibet Outside the TAR", told TIN: "There is nothing I can think of that could more dramatically or incontrovertibly hasten the end of the Tibetan character of the region than putting a railroad loop through Qinghai, the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), and perhaps into Yunnan or Sichuan. It's for that very reason that I think the state will do whatever it must to push the project through. Economically it's not a high-profit proposition, as was extending railroads across America's middle and western reaches. But despite the expense, it will create possibilities for mineral exploitation and commerce that did not exist before, which will generate large-scale and small-scale opportunities for employment and enterprise. That will stimulate the flow of 'human capital' into the area, bringing about demographic transformation."

The central authorities acknowledge that the purpose of building a railway is strategic as well as economic. The Tibet Daily stated earlier this month (12 December): "In particular, Tibet is located on the south-western border of the motherland, with a national boundary line over 4000km long. The unity of the nationalities and consolidation of national defense necessitate the urgent construction of a railway linking Tibet with the hinterland". The railway will enable the authorities to move army and security forces more easily for the purposes both of border defense and of internal control, and will be a further step towards the integration of Tibetan areas into the Chinese state as a means of "achieving stability".

The construction of a railway from China into Tibet will not only affect Tibetans living in the Tibet Autonomous Region; it will also have a major impact on the lives of Tibetans living along the route outside the TAR. In many cases these areas have remained relatively inaccessible from the rest of China, with Tibetans being able to preserve their own distinctive lifestyles and cultural traditions. The construction of a railway will accelerate development in rural townships that have previously attracted very little outside attention. Past experience suggests that incoming migrants attracted by these new commercial opportunities are likely to benefit to a greater extent than the resident Tibetan population. In the case of mineral exploitation, the Chinese state and the mining companies will be the main benefactors of increased access to the mineral wealth of Tibet. However, the exploitation of these resources, prioritized by President Jiang Zemin's campaign to develop the western regions, depends on the development of the necessary infrastructure.

"A line of unity, happiness and life"

Many Tibetans have of course benefited from reform and opening up in Tibetan areas, and there will also be ways in which some ordinary Tibetans may benefit economically from the railway. The railway will make the export of meat to other areas of China cheaper and more efficient and Tibetan herders could benefit from a resulting increase in demand for meat, though increasing herd sizes in response to market

demand could have serious environmental repercussions, particularly in those areas that are already experiencing problems from overgrazing and desertification.

The main concern for the majority of Tibetans, however, remains the issue of increased accessibility to Tibetan areas and closer links with China, leading to the increased migration of Chinese into Tibet attracted by a growth in economic activity both in resource exploitation and private commercial enterprises.

Towns such as Nagchu, Damshung and Amdo, which lie along the proposed Qinghai rail route, are likely to be completely transformed if the line is laid along this route, just as other towns in Qinghai were transformed by the construction of the Xining-Golmud railway in Qinghai province. Official statistics show that Xihai city, the capital of Tsojang (Ch: Haibei) TAP and Delingha, the capital of Tsonub (Ch: Haixi) Mongolian and Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, which both lie on the Xining-Golmud railway in Qinghai province, have the lowest proportion of Tibetan residents of any Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (TAP) in the People's Republic of China (PRC), with 2 per cent and 10 per cent respectively, not including those people without official residency status, according to "Tibet Outside the TAR". Although there are several factors which have effected the demographic balance of these areas, the arrival of the railway appears to have accelerated this change and has also facilitated the heavy exploitation of the mineral resources of both areas.

Work has already begun on enlarging the transportation capacity of the Xining-Golmud section of the line this year, involving "some 10,000 builders from eight railway construction units" (People's Daily 8, October 2000). This line, begun in 1958 and completed in May 1984, has facilitated the development of Qinghai, including the resource-rich Tsaidam basin region. "Most of the major materials used in Tibet's development were transported to Tibet through this railway line", according to the article, which adds that the railway line "is thus named as a line of unity, happiness and life by the people of all nationalities".

The preferred Qinghai railway route could accelerate the development of the gold mining industry in Nagchu (Ch: Naqu) prefecture in the TAR and also facilitate the exploitation of recent oil reserves found in the Lhunpola oil basin, in the Jangtang (high steppe; Chinese: Changtang) region in the north of Nagchu prefecture and south Kyegudo (Ch: Yushu) TAP in Qinghai. According to the TAR Specialist Plan, an internal document that maps out the development of Tibet up to 2020, "Tibet has a wealth of natural resources [Š] all of which are ripe for exploitation, but, constricted by the condition of basic communications infrastructure, the level of exploitation and utilization of these natural resources is extremely low". The Plan states that in the future, given the expected development in the TAR and the needs of stability and national defense, to rely only on roads would be "far from adequate to suit the needs of Tibetan economic and social development". It goes on to say that "more and more people are coming to the conclusion that construction of a railway into Tibet will have an extremely important role in providing impetus for the vigorous development of the TAR economy."

The development of the railway system in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region gives a vivid example of the impact that such major infrastructure projects can have on the lives of the "minority nationality" inhabitants. After the construction of the railway to Urumqi in 1960, many immigrants settled in north-western Xinjiang, where they are

now a majority. In autumn 1999, this railway line was extended to Kashgar, a remote oasis town in the far west of Xinjiang. This had an immediate impact on the local Uighur population in Kashgar. "Many Uighurs lost their livelihoods, through businesses being destroyed during the construction of the tracks, and due to loss of jobs transporting goods by road," a Uighur scholar now in exile told TIN. "The government says that the railway will help the economic development of Xinjiang, but it will further endanger the survival of Uighur Muslim culture and identity in the region. The Uighur people, who were already facing increasing pressure to survive due to the numbers of Chinese migrants arriving in the region, are simply unable to compete and to participate in the development of their own economy."

#### Rail link to Tibet "a top project"

On 11 December, the China Daily stated that a "rail link to Tibet is among the top projects to be sponsored by the government over the next five years", indicating that it is likely to receive substantial central funding under the Tenth Five Year Plan. The western regions of China are to be given 100bn yuan by the central government for railway construction during the plan period (2001-2005), part of which may be used as funding for the TAR railway. The authorities are also looking for additional sources of funding. The TAR preferential land-use policies published in November stipulate that those who invest in the construction of railways and railway stations "shall enjoy the priority of development, under the same conditions, of the land and underground resources on both sides along the line they invest in or within a fixed scope in the surrounding areas". (People's Daily, 23 November)

Feasibility studies on the four possible rail routes into the TAR from Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan provinces have now been completed and reviewed. On 15 December 2000 the People's Daily reported that Ren Xigui, spokesman for the Ministry of Railways, had revealed that the ministry recommended the Qinghai route as "the best choice". There has however been some disagreement amongst the provincial-level Railway Ministry bureau, which come under the Ministry of Railways, as to the best route, according to the Tibet Daily on 12 December. The Number One Surveying and Planning Institute of Lanzhou Railway Bureau (Gansu) favors the shorter and cheaper Qinghai plan. The Number Two Surveying and Planning Institute of Chengdu Railway Bureau (Sichuan) has argued for the longer, more expensive, Yunnan option because of the relatively good climate and resources of western Yunnan, which is also a key tourism area, and because this route gives direct access to the more developed areas of the TAR which are the richest in natural resources. (Tibet Daily, 12 December).

It is likely that jurisdictional interests have played some part in the respective recommendations of the railway bureau (the Lanzhou Railway Bureau has been involved in work this year on the Xining-Golmud line), as well as regional competition, particularly between the two military districts of north western and south western China. The interests of the People's Liberation Army are paramount in determining the foundation of national security and military infrastructure in China - two of the key motivations for constructing the railroad. Qinghai, Gansu and the far western tip of the TAR are in the Lanzhou Military Region, while the rest of the TAR and Sichuan and Yunnan provinces are in the Chengdu Military Region. If the railway was built from the south west, the whole route would lie within the Chengdu Military Region, which would greatly enhance the importance of their command. The final decision, which will be made by the State

Council and the Party Committee, is expected next spring.

#### The four routes

The Qinghai route starts from south of Golmud at Nanshankou, where the Xining-Golmud line currently terminates. It follows a similar route to the current Qinghai-Tibet highway to Lhasa, via Kyegudo (Ch: Yushu) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Qinghai and Nagchu prefecture in the TAR. The railway line will be "1,080 km in length, with 564 km in Qinghai province and 516 km in the Tibet Autonomous Region", according to the Tibet Daily (12 December 2000). It is expected to take seven to eight years to complete, requiring a total investment of 19.4 billion yuan (about 2.34bn US dollars) according to 1995 figures.

The key challenge of this route is altitude, as much of the land over which the railway will pass is over 4,000m above sea level. Starting at Golmud (approximately 2,800m), the route gradually ascends to cross the Kunlun mountains, probably via the Khunu-la pass (4,722m). The railway will then take a long climb up to the Dang-la (Ch: Tanggula) pass which, at over 5000m above sea level, marks the boundary between the TAR and Qinghai. The route then descends, more steeply than the ascent, to Amdo (Ch: Anduo) county town (4,600m) and the rich pasturelands of Nagchu (4,300m) and Damshung (Ch: Dangxiong), passing through Lhasa municipality to terminate at Lhasa city (3,590m). According to the Tibet Daily article, 2.8 per cent of the route will consist of tunnels and bridges.

The Yunnan route, favored by the Chengdu Railway Institute, is considerably more expensive, requiring total investment of over 63.59bn yuan (1997 figures; about 7.66bn US dollars) and has a length of 1594.4km. This route, which it is estimated would take ten years to build, starts at Dali, the western-most point of Yunnan's rail network, and would go north up through the Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Dechen (Ch: Diqing), and then west to Lhasa via Kongpo (Ch: Gongbu) prefecture, TAR.

The other two routes proposed, one from Gansu province and one from Sichuan province, are even more expensive (63.84bn yuan and 76.79bn yuan respectively) and even longer (2,126km and 1,927km). The Gansu line would join up with the Golmud line at Nagchu, having passed through Kanlho (Ch: Gannan) TAP in Gansu, Golog (Ch: Guoluo) TAP in Qinghai, the northern edge of Kardze (Ch: Ganzi) TAP in Sichuan and Kyegudo TAP in Qinghai; the Sichuan line would join up with the Yunnan route after Zhongshaba near Nyingtri (Ch: Linzhi) town in Kongpo, having passed through Ngaba (Ch: Aba) and Kardze TAPs in Sichuan and Chamdo prefecture in the TAR.